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# Clarke County Easement News

SUMMER

2007

## Three landowners add 109.3 acres to open space since January

### Six DUR's Extinguished

### Mesilla

Since the first of the year, the Authority has accepted easements on three parcels of land donated by far-sighted residents dedicated to preserving open space in Clarke County.

The first parcel totaling 5.22 acres is located on the mountain next to Willow Lake. It was donated by Bob and Jeanne Wade who also gave up one dwelling unit right. This is the Authority's first easement in this area, but quite possibly not the last. The Authority is hoping to receive donations of another two parcels that would include the lake, bringing the total to 25 acres.

The second property totaling 11.62 acres was donated by Sandra and Clifford Nelson and includes the relinquishment of one DUR. The property is in the Longmarsh district off Russell Road where few parcels are currently protected by conservation easements. In keeping with its goal to preserve significant parcels of land throughout Clarke, the Authority is hopeful that the Nelson's donation will prompt others in this area to consider placing permanent easements on their properties.

The final parcel totaling 92.5 acres was donated by the Stuart family and is located outside White Post. [Ed note: See related story at right]. The donation includes relinquishment of four dwelling unit rights.

"Mesilla," as the property is called, is notable for many reasons. The land is primarily open pasture and has been farmed by the Stuart family for generations. It is adjacent to another property already held in easement – visually extending an already impressive stretch of open space. It fronts on a road designated by the state as a scenic byway and is rich in natural resources.

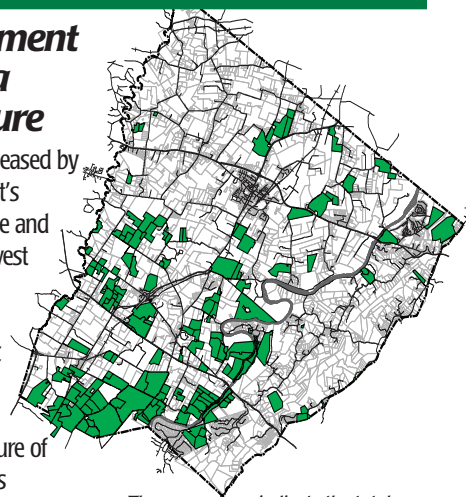


"Mesilla" sits on a small hill situated on a portion of the "Greenway Court" property once owned by the family of Sarah Wrenshaw Kennerly Massey. When she and her husband Edward White Massey were building the house, Sara asked her brother, who was then on a trip in the Southwest, to suggest a name. He proposed "Mesilla" which roughly translated means "little hill" in Spanish.

The 2-story, Greek Revival-style brick dwelling rests on a raised foundation and features a hipped roof with a widow's walk. Architectural historian, Maral S. Kalbian, commenting on the historic significance of the house, notes that it is "one of the best examples of the Greek Revival-style in Clarke County and has remarkable architectural integrity along with several of its historic outbuildings."

### Conservation Easement Programs Ensure a Future for Agriculture

According to new statistics released by the American Farmland Trust's Farmland Information Center, state and local governments continue to invest in purchase of agricultural conservation easement (PACE) programs to ensure the economic viability of agriculture and to protect the nation's farmland – even as Congress debates the future of the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP). The annual survey shows state and local PACE programs spent more than \$205 million to protect 130,959 acres of farm and ranch land in 2006. "In spite of tough budget decisions, state and local officials are allocating money toward agricultural land protection," noted Bob Wagner, American Farmland Trust's managing director for field programs.



The green areas indicate the total amount of land held in permanent easement in Clarke County as of July, 2007. The Conservation Easement Authority is one of four governmental organizations which currently holds easements in Clarke. Since its creation in 2003, the Authority has contributed over 1,000 acres to the 17,000 acres of private land now held in permanent easement, including many small yet highly significant parcels that might otherwise have been lost to development.

### Q. What does \$1.36 represent?

A. According to a study conducted by Clarke County, this is the amount the county spends on services to residents, including education, sewer and water, fire and rescue, roads and other infrastructure, for every \$1.00 it receives from them in taxes. The .36 cent deficit is absorbed by farms and commercial/industrial development which cost the county just .14 and .26 cents respectively for every dollar they pay in taxes!

Perhaps most significantly, it features historic dwellings that contribute to the Greenway Historic District, created by the National Park Service in 1975 when it added the entire area, once home to Lord Fairfax, to its list of national landmarks.

# Donors Celebrate Summer Solstice, June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2<sup>nd</sup> “Thank You” Reception

**O**n an evening that could have inspired a John Constable painting, 37 men and women who’ve demonstrated their support of open space by making financial contributions to the Authority, gathered outside the home of Authority Chair, Wingate “Winkie” Mackay-Smith and her husband, Matthew Mackay-Smith for the Authority’s 2nd Annual “Thank You” reception.

Savoring the breathtaking views and a fine spread of wine and cheese on this first night of summer, donors had a chance to meet each other, Authority committee members and staff, as well as landowners, Bob and Terry Chandler and Silvia Wilson who put their properties in permanent easement through the Authority in 2006. (It was noted that contributors Mel Kohn and Edna Small who attended last year’s reception had decided in the intervening months to follow in the Chandler and Wilson footsteps and put their land in permanent easement, too!)

The guest list included new residents and first time donors, Eunice Murray and Mark Paulson along with long time

contributors such as David and Anne Weiss who have supported the effort virtually from the beginning of the Authority’s creation in 2003. Winkie thanked everyone for their financial support which, together with grants from federal and state sources, has enabled the Authority to preserve 1,137.06 acres of open space and extinguish 33 dwelling unit rights in just four years.

The sun was still shining as the last guests departed — two hours after the event was scheduled to end! Many commented on how much they enjoyed the reception and looked forward to more get-togethers in the future.

They won’t have to wait long.

The Authority is hosting a lecture for donors at Blandy Experimental Farm in Boyce on Sunday, November 4th featuring Bob Lee, Executive Director of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. Lee was formerly Clarke County’s administrator and a prime mover in establishing sliding scale zoning which has enabled Clarke to retain its rural, agricultural character. *[See related story below].*

## Virginia Open Space: Going. Going. Gone?

Special Presentation for Donors, November 4, 2007

Blandy Experimental Farm, 2:00 to 4:00 pm

**A**ccording to the American Farmland Trust, Virginia ranks 16th among the 50 states in loss of prime farmland and next to last in per capita expenditures for the preservation of natural resources. At the same time agriculture/ forestry is the state’s leading industry accounting for more than \$64 billion in annual sales and economic benefits.

Why the disconnect? And what’s being done to address it — in Richmond and in enlightened counties like Clarke?

Find out at a special presentation for donors on Sunday, November 4, 2007 at Blandy Experimental Farm in Boyce featuring Bob Lee. Former Clarke County Administrator, Lee is currently Executive Director of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation created by the Virginia General Assembly in 1966



to protect our state’s natural and cultural heritage land resources. Today the VOF is the largest public land trust in the nation — holding more than 2000 easements on over 400,000 acres of land.

Traveling regularly throughout the state, Lee has first-hand knowledge of the challenges facing Virginia which he’ll explore during the presentation as well as offer some encouraging news on progress being made in a number of counties — including Clarke.

An invitation will be in the mail to this donor-only event in early October. Space is limited. To assure yourself a seat, make sure to RSVP as soon as the invitation arrives.

*Bob Lee, Executive Director of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation is the featured speaker at a special presentation for donors at Blandy in November.*

## Many Thanks to ALL Our Contributors\*

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\*as of June 30, 2007